

## **Moses Rust Jr.**

### **Died in line of duty on 30 July 1867**

#### **Description of Act**

Moses Rust, Jr. died on July 30, 1867 from the effects of flames inhaled at a fire the day before at the summer residence of Mr. Eben Dale of Fresh Water Cove. The fire, caused by three gas explosions, was such a calamity that, in addition to Rust's death, seventeen persons were seriously burned. In Mr. Dale's cellar there was an automatic gas machine which converted gasoline into gas to light the building. Captain Turnbull, a son-in-law of Mr. Dale, and two other people entered the cellar with lanterns to examine the malfunctioning machine and discovered that there was too much gasoline in cans and buckets which they placed on the cellar floor. Gasoline fumes from the containers and gas machine began to saturate the cellar and, ignited by the lantern flame, caused the first explosion. The Fire Department was summoned, but turned back when they were met by a messenger who said that they were no longer needed because the flames had been extinguished.

Soon after, Mr. Thomas Clark, the coachman, went into the cellar to determine if any signs of fire remained. Then someone entered the cellar with a lantern, and a second explosion enveloped the cellar with flames; the soldering on the gas machine pipes melted, allowing gas to escape in larger quantities. Mr. Clark was severely burned on his face and arms. The Fire Department was summoned again, and on arrival the firefighters extinguished the fire. Soon some of the firefighters began to enter the cellar again to determine if any traces of the fire remained. Messrs. Eben and Theron Dale urged them not to do so, explaining the prior circumstances and warning that the gas was still leaking. The men did not seem to understand the danger and reentered the cellar with hoseman Moses Rust, Jr., in advance, carrying a lantern.

A tremendous explosion occurred shortly thereafter, blowing some people out of the cellar and knocking down many others who were standing in the yard. Several men emerged from the cellar-way enveloped in flames and were immediately seized by bystanders who took off their own garments and wrapped them around the victims and rolled them on the grass to extinguish the flames. Some of the men were so badly disfigured they could scarcely be recognized and the agony they endured from their wounds was most heart-wrenching to witness.

Rust was severely burned on his body, arms, face, and breast, and he undoubtedly inhaled the deadly flames. Among the other seventeen persons seriously burned were at least seven firefighters; Bennett Griffin, Assistant Engineer; William Bickford, Chief Engineer; Frank Burnham, Assistant Foreman, Steamer Cape Ann; Sherman J. Carter, Assistant Foreman, Steamer Magnolia; Stephen Rich, hoseman of Steamer Magnolia; William Gardner, hoseman of Steamer Cape Ann; and Thomas Raymond, Fire Police.

#### **Background**

Moses Rust, Jr. was the son of Moses and Judith (Burnham) Rust and was 37 years and 10 months old when he died. He was survived by his parents and his wife, Ellen Hazel

Rust. He was an active and efficient member of the Fire Department, ever forward where duty called, regardless of any danger.

### **Postscripts**

Rust's funeral was attended by more than 100 members of the Fire Department and a long line of citizens. The burial service of the Masonic Fraternity was held at the graveside.

A four-wheeled hose carriage purchased in 1872 and located at the Smith Street house, bore the name "MOSES RUST" in honor of that respected firefighter who lost his life at his post of duty, July 30, 1867. This hose carriage saw service for the next 21 years.

### **References**

*The Gloucester Telegraph*, July 31, 1867 and August 3, 1867.

*Cape Ann Weekly Advertiser*, August 2, 1867.

*The Gloucester Fire Department - Its History and Work from 1793 to 1893*, published by the Steam Fire Association, Gloucester, Massachusetts, 1892. Gloucester City Hall records.